

Letters

Grave Doubts About Teacher Evaluation

We should be cautious before we "train" evaluators to use those teacher evaluation systems (April 1987 theme issue on "Progress in Evaluating Teaching") described as "mounted securely" on "research-based criteria" (p. 3) because they don't exist. The teacher effectiveness research is at best correlational.

What I see is an effort to train evaluators in the uncritical use of certain evaluation procedures when a serious educational analysis of such procedures would raise grave doubts as to their validity. (Note the "24-Hour Teacher Performance Appraisal Training" program mentioned by David Holdskom on p. 44.)

Having spent many years evaluating teachers, I think we had better remember that a principal never sits "in an unobtrusive place" (p. 43) in a classroom and that people sincerely disagree about what constitutes good teaching.

We can require teachers to arrive at school on time and perform other

similar routine duties; to specify clear, approved "expectations" (p. 13); to evaluate students accurately on their progress toward meeting those objectives as opposed to evaluating teachers on student progress. We can also require teachers to diagnose students who have not achieved the objectives and to use alternative pedagogical procedures (p. 16). But beyond that—which would represent considerable progress—we had better limit our remarks to suggestions and not discourage teacher initiative, creativity, and idealism.

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Locker Room Humor Disparages TRUE Profession

I object to the analogy used by Thomas J. Sergiovanni in the May 1987 issue ("Will We Ever Have a TRUE Profes-

sion?", p. 47). The distinction between "phonetic" and "semantic" is a thought-provoking one—but a pinch is a pinch, whether in New York or in Rome. It is a gesture with sexual meaning (under any circumstance) and when performed by a stranger, degrading to women.

Perhaps we will have a *true* profession when men, dominant in power in the field, understand that women, dominant in numbers, are people, that locker room jokes are inappropriate in a professional journal, and that others will not respect us as professionals unless we respect one another.

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